

A Metaphysical Stance Of Shaykh Al-Jīlī (D.1424) Concerning Divine Mercy And Its Applications

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Abstract

This paper intends to grasp the interpretations of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d.1424) regarding Divine Mercy (DM) with special reference to its pragmatic and practical dimensions. It is significant to know that how al-Jīlī (d.1424) explained the correlation of various Divine Attributes with one another? The concept of the perfect man and divine exhalation (nafas al-raḥmah) along with the human journey towards Allah Almighty categorizing it into different stages and grades are the integral parts of his perception. In this qualitative approach, we visited the metaphysical views of Shaykh al-Jīlī (d.1424) regarding al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyyah and its application in the anthropocosmic realm This study shows that Mercy of Allah Almighty works to bring the universe into existence and what is associated with it including human beings. The compassion and psychological experience of human beings can be understood by explaining the Doctrine of Divine Impassibility (DDI) vis-à-vis Divine Mercy. According to his stance, Divine Mercy (DM) is the source (aṣl) of existence and sustenance of all that exists. It functions in the cosmic systems and locates human beings in relation to the God, Man and Universe Relationship (GMUR). In this connection, human perfection is conditional to follow the footsteps of the Prophet of Islam (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) for salvation and happiness in this world and in the world hereafter. All these blessings have special nexus to the application of mercy in a society promoting values having metaphysical footings and grounds in the light of al-Jīlī’s worldview. It leads us to think about the building blocks of a Raḥmah-Oriented Society (ROS) which can promote peace, love and mercy around the globe lessening ill-feeling, hatred, unrest and antagonism.

Keywords: Al-Jīlī, Metaphysical views, al-Raḥmah (DM), Applications (ROS), Human Perfection, Psychological Experience

I. Introduction

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d.1424), is a prominent figure in Islamic Ṣūfī traditions and philosophies. Al-Jīlī belongs to the Qādirīyya Ṣūfī order founded by Syednā Shaykh ‘Abdul Qādir al-Jīlānī (d.1166). Corbin shows that there are common grounds of thought and viewpoints between al-Jīlī

(d.1424) and Ibn al-‘Arabī (Corbin, 306-8, n-d.). His work and publications present various metaphysical remarks concerning Divine Essence and Attributes. According to him, the attribute of mercy and compassion (al-Raḥmāniyah) is an expression of the reality of Divine Names and Attributes. Shaykh Abdul Karim al-Jīlī’s ancestry on his

mother's side was linked directly to Shaykh 'Abdul Qādir al-Jīlānī (d.1166). Al-Jīlī was born 200 years after the death of Shaykh al-Jīlānī (d.1166). His famous contribution is known as; Al-Insān al-Kāmil (The Universal and Perfect man). Moreover, this paper intends to grasp his metaphysical views regarding DM (al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyah) which revolve around the conceptual foundation based upon the Qur'ān encapsulating several ideas of philosophical understandings.

His philosophy of mercy demands human upgradation in accordance with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (ṣallā llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam). It is required to understand that how different stages of human spiritual development have been saturated with raḥmah-oriented dealings, role and thought in the world keeping in views the relationship with Allah Almighty, nature and human beings. There are several aspects of human life associated with practical, psychological and metaphysical concerns where the role of mercy is unique and significant.

It is mandatory to comprehend that up to what extent his thought reveals a building block based upon merciful dealings and relations with the aim of social betterment reducing hatreds and dispute in the community. What are the parameters and principles of Raḥmah-Oriented Society (ROS) in accordance with the al-Jīlīan thought? Therefore, this paper presents some significant aspects of his interpretations locating mercy (al-raḥmah) coordinated with the multiple phases of human life and Divine

Bestowal solely defined with notion 'al-raḥmah' and the other Divine Attributes. We should concentrate whether his thought cause to bring a positive change in one's private life to that of the collective and social life.

2. Divine Mercy vis-à-vis the other Divine Attributes

Al-Jīlī (d.1424) explained the correlation of various Divine Attributes with one another. He says Compassionate Beatitude (al-Raḥmāniyah) is superior to that of Divine Oneness ('Ulūhiyyah) (and vice versa) due to specific contexts. He explained his philosophical ideas taking into account the correlation and comparison of various things.

For example, sugar has significance, in case, when we pay attention to sugar (sukkar) in relation to that of cane (qṣab). While sugar and other things are parts of cane and it can be considered superior in this way. On the other hand, cane (qṣab) is too important having all things plus sugar. Noticing this analogy then in this way Divine Oneness ('Ulūhiyyah) is nobler than the DM (al-Raḥmah) because it designates the manifestation of the essence. Divinity Oneness ('Ulūhiyyah) encompasses all what is related to reality and createdness. It is generally (things are) related to ('Ulūhiyyah) and specifically correlated to (al-Raḥmāniyah). But all perfection and excellence are due to the Best Manifestation (al-Mazhar al-'Āzam) or in other words also called as Divine Mercy. The hierarchical links between both attributes have been commented with an example of sugar itself and sugar in cane. I would like to present this concept in a table:

Attributes	Example	Analogous	Remarks
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Divine Oneness (D.O) (‘Ulūhiyyah)	Sugar itself Sugar Cane	Like Sugar (sukkar)	DO at symmetric to CB sugar has super rank as compared to cane
Compassionate Beatitude (C.B) (al-Raḥmāniyah)	Sugar itself Sugar Cane	Like Cane (qasab)	C.B over D.O sugar plus other ingredients.

Table-I. (Al-Raḥmāniyah) vis-à-vis Divine Oneness (‘Ulūhiyyah)

According to Al-Jīlī (d.1424) life, knowledge, power, will, word, hearing and sight all these are the qualities associated with the Divine Mercy. While Divine Name of the essence encompasses unity, unicity, the sanctity and those which resemble them. Al-Raḥmān (the Most Merciful) encompasses all created order and manifestation of Divine Oneness.

Moreover, elaborating the notion ‘mercy’ he discussed the concept of al-Raḥmāniyyah and its mutual relation with the other Divine Attributes (Al-Jīlī, 21-22, 1985).

In another book, he discussed the attributes of Divine Name al-Raḥmān entitled as “al-Raḥmāniyyah.” It is a key factor to take place the existence and manifestation of Names and Attributes and (these) are also because of al-Raḥmāniyyah. The beginning of worlds (and all types of evolution after this beginning) is due to Divine Mercy. It includes what is exist generally at the commencement or at the end as well as apparently and what is hidden. He considered mercy as an attribute of essence (ṣiffah al-dhātiyyah) and justice as attribute of action (ṣiffah al-fi‘l) (Al-Jīlī, 30-35, n-d.)

He further opined:

“the universal mercy flows from the presence of compassionate (raḥmah).” Al-Jīlī ,52-53, 1997).

Al-Jīlī (d.1424) discussed that Lord manifests Himself revealing His Perfection as Divine Mercy. It dominates and penetrates the existence, because of its principal rules. Mercy saturates all what is existed and first mercy and due to its expression is created entities and existents itself took place.

Then he referred the Qur’ānic verse:

”وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ“

“And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: Behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect.” [Al-Qur’ān (45:13)].

Furthermore, all existents are loci of manifestation of (an aspect of) Divine Beauty, because they attain existence by receiving Mercy from Allah Mighty, which is an attribute of beauty. While Divine Majesty is manifested in the creation, it does not embrace all existents in such a way as embraced by Divine Beauty. Shaykh al-Jīlī

(d.1424) says it is the mystery of the Prophetic Saying (Ḥadīth):

“My mercy precedes My wrath,”
[Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, H. 3022, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, H. 2751.]

It is a key Scriptural source for the Akbarian theory of ontological mercy (al-Jīlī, al-Fattāh, 68, n-d.). According to him punishment is like sore medicine (to cure). Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938) spared a major part of his Ph.D dissertation presenting the philosophical viewpoints offered by Shaykh al-Jīlī (d.1424).

He writes:

“The third step, or as Hegel would say, Voyage of being, has another appellation (Mercy). The first Mercy, the author says, is the evolution of the Universe from Himself and the manifestation of His own self in every atom of the result of His own self-diremption... Al-Jīlī (d.1424) makes this point clearer by an instance. ... the attributes of Mercy are closely connected with the attribute of Providence. He defines it as the sum of all that existence stands in need of. Plants are supplied with water through the force of this Name.” (Iqbal, 125-26, n-d.).

Dr Iqbāl (d.1938) indicates the reciprocal relationship between mercy and benevolence. It shows Divine involvement and perfection in the created things and their gradual enhancement accompanied by a beautiful glimpse and aesthetics.

3. Divine Mercy is the Source (aṣl) of the Existence

Shaykh al-Jīlī (d.1424) like Ibn ‘Arabī, considered that the Divine Mercy is the source (aṣl) of existence, the first expression of mercy due to which Allah Almighty had

bestowed mercy upon existents. It was His provision of existence to the world. For this purpose, the level of all-mercifulness is defined as the level of “making the realities of the Names and Attributes appear” (al-zuhūr bi-ḥaḳā’iq al-asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt). Hence, all-mercifulness is like Rubūbiyyah, both bring creation into existence. Indeed, all Mercifulness is a more specific (akhaṣṣ) form of (Rubūbiyyah), the relationship between them being like that of rock candy to sugar cane (Fitzroy, 56, 2018). Thus in accordance with the philosophy of Al-Jīlī (d.1424) the Divine Name Allah encompasses all of the Divine Names, while the Divine Name al-Raḥmān stands between the names of the essence that belong to Allah alone (asmā’ al-dhāt) whereas the Divine Names of the self (al-asmā’ al-nafsiyyah) are known as the Powerful (al-Qādir), the Knowing (al-‘Ālim), the Hearing (al-Samī‘).

In the light of the philosophical thought of Shaykh al-Jīlī (d.1424) Nicholas stated:

“God creates through a Divine exhalation and breath (nafas al-raḥmān) bringing the universe into existence. But almost as important as Mercy is divine Love, the motivating factor behind creation and act of Self-manifestation (tajallī) or unveiling (kashf) or emanation (fayḍ), the ultimate reason why the universe is brought into existence.” (Lo Polito, 61-62, 2010).

Al-Jīlī (d.1424) is similar to what Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240) articulated concerning Divine Mercy (al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyyah). His

writings show that al-Raḥmān is One Who brings things into existence due to His Mercy.

Shaykh al-Jīlī (d.1424) stated the stages of existence (Marātib al-Wujūd) in relation to the concept of Divine Mercy. He divided this study into various stages. In stage five and ten, Al-Jīlī (d.1424) talked about Divine Names and Attributes and their manifestations in relation to al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyyah. It indicates the creation from nothingness due to DM. Divine Mercy plays a precursory role behind the Multiplicity (kathrah) and vastness in the creation. He also affirmed that because of Divine Mercy existence of anthropocosmic entities have taken place (Al-Jīlī, 16, 22-23, n-d.). Then he referred to a part of Qur'ānic verse:

[Al-Qur'ān *وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ* (7:156)]. “

(Wa Raḥmatī wasi'at Kullah Shay'in) “But My mercy extendeth to all things”

He stated that Divine Address ‘O, Moses (‘Alayī ’l-Salām) you can’t see’, was due to the manifestation of al-Rubūbiyyah. It was not because of Divine Attributes known as; al-Ulūhiyyah and al-Wāḥidiyyah. However, Mūsā (Moses) (‘Alayī ’l-Salām) would have not fallen nor stone rent asunder only if Divine Address would have taken place due to the Divine Attribute: al-Raḥmāniyyah (Allah knows best) (Al-Jīlī, 16-17, n-d.).

So, his interpretation shows manifestation of DM (al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyyah) is something else as compared to the other Divine Attributes.

4. DM and its Role in God, Man and Universe relationship (GMUR)

The concept of ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d.1424) regarding DM and its role in God, man and universe relationship (GMUR) includes the significance of al-Risālah al-Muḥammadiyyah, Divine Names and Attributes, Prophetic relation with Allah Almighty and human spiritual association with the Prophet of Islam (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam). He referred to the Qur'ānic verses (9:108) and (7:156). According to him there are two types of mercy i.e. special mercy and mercy in general (raḥmah al-‘Āmah). The type mentioned later has been defined with reference to al-Ḥaḥiqah al-Muḥammadiyyah. (Al-Jīlī, al-Kīyyalī, 16-17, n-d.).

So, his philosophy of mercy revolves around the Prophetic mercy and human relationship with Allah Almighty through the intermediation of Prophet of Islam (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam). For example, various references of “Qāba Qawsayn” pointed out the travelling of mercy from Allah towards the Prophet and its benefits to the entire humankind (Al-Jīlī, al-Mazīdī, 24, 39-41, 63-64., n-d.). In the discussion; place of man in the cosmos, Howard mentioned worldview of al-Jīlī seeking similarity in the other philosophies and religion. Locating man at the middle of cosmos playing a significant role between Allah Almighty and His creature.(Howard, 25, 2011)

Shaykh al-Jīlī (d.1424) explained more than one hundred stages or expressions (manāzir) and their difficulties and calamities (āfāt) (in the way) and discussed mercy concerning the complications of step-I (manzar-1) ..., manzar al-kamāl and manzar istīlā' quoting the verses of Sūrah Ṭāhā (20:5-6). (Al-Jīlī, Ghunaymī, 92, 196, 199, 1997). Furthermore, he referred to the Qur'ānic verses:

”الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴿٢٠﴾ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى“

“(God) Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority). To Him belongs what is in the heaven and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil.” [Al-Qur’ān (20:5-6)]

Yūsuf ‘Alī commented against note number 2536 that if things seem to be wrong in our imperfect vision on this earth, we must remember that God, ... sits on the throne of mercy ... God’s authority is not like an authority on earth, which may be questioned, or which may not last. His authority is ‘firmly established.’ This is a significant remark and understanding the concept of Divine Impassibility (DDI) which is incorporates the psychological experience of human beings. The Qur’ān states:

”الرَّحْمَنُ فَاسْأَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا“

“(Al-Raḥmān) God most Gracious: ask thou, then, about Him of any acquainted (with such things).” [Al-Qur’ān (25:59)]

Ask Prophet Muhammad (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) about Allah Almighty and He (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) knows well about Him. Several exegetes (mufasssīrīn) also explained this fact. The role of DM in the whole cosmic phenomenon and Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam): a role model and the mercy for whole mankind, is the living agent for the world[s] created by Allah Almighty (Al-Jīlī, al-Fattāh, 108,127, n-d.). Prophetic ascension and journey towards attributes (ṣifāt) is due to mercy and

is an evidence of his apex (kamāl). He mentioned the ethical dimensions to be followed obeying the perfect standards given by Messenger of Islam (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam). (Al-Jīlī, Farīd al-Mazīdī, 24-41, 2000). Ibn al-‘Arabī (d.1240) and al-Jīlī (d.1424) conveyed a shape of spiritual meditation towards the Prophet’s dhāt or essential reality, which was endowed with a singular power to reflect the Divine Countenance at all (Salih, 25, 2020). Endeavour of Islamic Sufism based on objectives which turn around the merciful behaviour of Prophet of Islam. Therefore, applications of raḥmah-based work and ethics can bring a positive change in a human living style for social betterment. His thought of perfect man may provide a precursory input to set up a Raḥmah-Oriented Society (ROS).

5. Conclusion

This This study shows that Shaykh al-Jīlī (d.1424) clarified the subtle philosophical enigma with understandable examples. Regarding Divine Mercy, he admitted the role of mercy in relation to creatio ex nihilo considering the preference of Attribute al-Raḥmānīyah over various other Divine Attributes. Interpretation of Al-Jīlī (d.1424) turns around the Divine Attributes and the relation of different manifestations of Divine Names with each other. Al-Jīlī (d.1424) allows us to examine and test his thought in the light of Qur’ān and Sunnah. It is noteworthy to re-judge his Prophetic love and understanding thoroughly what are the objectives behind his views and episteme instead of charging him as one whose expressions are divinifying the Prophet (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam). His concept of al-Raḥmah and its supreme closeness to existence, creation from nothingness and manifestation everywhere doesn’t allow the

localization (ḥulūl) or the idea of reincarnation. He is best known for his idea of the Perfect Man and various implications to accomplish the requirement of *Insān-kāmil* (the universal man) in the light of teaching given by the Prophet of Islam (ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam). This brief review concerning the metaphysical stance of Shaykh Al-Jīlī (d.1424) regarding DM and its applications in personal and social life presents the relationship of Divine bestowal vis-à-vis the ability of human senses and faculty to function. In psychological matters, the question of passion, mercy and DDI demands deep concern regarding the difference between Divine and human nature. His thought may cause to bring a revolution in one’s private life to that of the collective and social paradigm (in the shape of ROS) receiving al-Raḥmah from Allah Almighty and delivering it to the whole human beings and cosmic order.

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